

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ANTI-BULLYING GUIDANCE

(To be read in conjunction with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy)

Guidance section 1 - The nature of bullying - from "Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence"

1. There are many definitions of bullying, but most consider it to be:
 - deliberately hurtful (including aggression)
 - repeated often over a period of time
 - difficult for victims to defend themselves against

2. Bullying can take many forms, but three main types are:
 - physical - hitting, kicking, taking belongings
 - verbal - name calling, insulting, making offensive remarks
 - indirect - spreading nasty stories about someone, exclusion from social groups, being made the subject of malicious rumours, sending malicious emails or text messages on mobile phones

3. Name calling is the most common direct form. This may be because of individual characteristics, but pupils can be called nasty names because of their ethnic origin, nationality or colour; sexual orientation; or some form of disability. [4]

Who is involved in bullying - and where

4. A survey of 5 primary schools and 14 secondary schools across England in 1997, taking evidence from 2,308 pupils aged 10 to 14 years, showed that bullying is widespread. There was bullying in all schools, although a comparison with earlier work indicates a reduction during the 1990s.

Guidance section 2 - Bullying and its effects

The nature of bullying

Bullying takes different forms. Good school policies and training for staff analyse the different forms of bullying that pupils may experience. Unpleasant territory though it is, understanding bullying is the starting point for effective detection and response. Defining and analysing bullying can help pupils, as well as staff, to combat it.

A distinction is commonly made between physical and verbal bullying, although they can occur together and verbal abuse can carry a strong threat of violence. The common factor is the intention to undermine and degrade the individual by picking on vulnerability or making difference a fault. Those who bully aim to hurt by means of force, intimidation or ridicule in order to control others, or perhaps to inspire a reaction that escalates the situation.

Physical bullying seeks to intimidate and cause fear; at serious levels (assault, actual bodily harm or wounding) it is a criminal offence. Pupils comment that a common form of physical bullying is pushing and shoving – ‘bumping’ or jostling with deliberate intent. It can happen too often for the victim to see it as accidental, but it can be difficult to complain about because those who do it are adamant that it was unintentional. Physical bullying can also involve theft of or damage to property – although, of course, not all instances of theft or damage are evidence of bullying. The threat of violence very often accompanies thefts from persons – for example, of mobile phones or money – and there can be clear instances of extortion focused on weaker pupils. The motive – or a large part of it – is to demonstrate power and create fear.

Verbal bullying most often takes the form of name-calling. The range of name-calling and other unpleasant language is wide and there are significant differences in its gravity. Contemporary media for verbal abuse include messages by mobile phone and email, which means that bullying can even invade life at home.

More difficult to define and detect are those forms of bullying that are intended to hurt by spreading rumours, making malicious accusations, manipulating social networks, and seeking to sideline or ostracise individuals.

It is a sad fact that the focus of bullying can be more or less anything that distinguishes an individual and represents a deviation from a presumed ‘norm’ – for example size, body shape, hair colour, skin, eyesight, dress, language or mannerisms; and prowess, or the lack of it, in learning, sport or other activity. It can focus on personal backgrounds, including parents’ jobs, houses and lifestyles, and can sometimes derive from deep-seated local feuding, with disagreements between adults passed to children, who then act them out in school. Bullying can focus on race, nationality, culture or religion, or a mixture of these – with distinction, for example, between racism and religious bigotry being quite lost on the perpetrator. It can also focus on sexual attractiveness, or the lack of it, and sexuality, based on homophobia, misogyny, or both.

Finally, there are differences in how bullying is conducted. It can be a one-off or sustained, and damaging either way. It can be painfully obvious, but it can also be surreptitious and subtle. Direct physical bullying and threats of physical bullying, more often used by boys, are usually more evident than verbal intimidation and manipulation, which is more common among girls. Bullying can be perpetrated by an individual, one-on-one, or by a group on one individual or on a group. Bystanders sometimes show tacit acceptance to such an extent that the victims see them as part of the problem.

GUIDANCE SECTION 3 – Proposed Reporting & Monitoring Forms

1. STAFF - Record of bullying incident

• Staff investigating the incident:	
• Who reported the incident:	
• Date of incident:	
• Time of incident:	
• Name and form (class) of pupil who has been bullied:	

- Nature of Incident:

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- Location of incident:

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- Frequency e.g. is this the first time or have there been previous incidents with any/some of the same parties?

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- Action taken following the incident.

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- Involvement of parents?

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- Follow up e.g. date and time of next meeting(s).

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- Identification of short/long-term needs of bully and victim.

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PUPIL - Report of Incident

Name:

Date:

Time:

Please explain what happened:
(who, what, when, where)

Pupil
Signed: _____

Teacher
Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

WEEKLY MONITORING SHEET

Name:

Day
What happened
Where

Day
What happened
Where

Day
What happened
Where

Monitored by: Date:.....

GUIDANCE SECTION 4 - Resources Available

The following list shows a selection of books and videos on bullying prepared by the NSPCC and available on their website:

www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/ReadingLists/Bullying.asp

FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Bullying.

Elliott, Michele

London: Hodder Children's Books, 1998

ISBN: 0340714832

A book to help teenagers cope with bullying and to seek help if they are bullied. Includes chapters on assertiveness, how to make friends, and exercises on self-esteem.

The Willow Street kids: beat the bullies.

Elliott, Michele

London: Macmillan Children's Books, 1997

ISBN: 0330351850

Fiction aimed at 10-14 year olds.

The angel of Nitshill Road.

Fine, Anne

London: Mandarin, 1992

ISBN: 074970974X

For junior school children. Originally read on Jackanory.

Sam's secret: [a story to help all children].

Grant, Wendy

Castle Cary, Somerset: Mendip Publishing, 1993/4

ISBN: 0905903358

For children aged 5-12, a story about bullying, featuring woodland animals.

You can beat bullying: a guide for young people.

Kidscape

London: Kidscape, 1994

Booklet for bullies and victims.

Beyond bullying: a guide for coping after bullying.

Martin, Howard, Shenton, Gaby and Bracher-Giles, Cath

Kidscape

London: Kidscape, 1999

ISBN: 1872572065

You choose.

National Deaf Children's Society

London: National Deaf Children's Society, 1990

ISBN: 0904691322

A book to help young deaf children to protect themselves from abuse.

Buster and the amazing Daisy.

Ogaz, Nancy

London: Jessica Kingsley, 2002

ISBN: 184310721X

A children's story about Daisy, who has autism, and Buster the rabbit who helps Daisy defeat her bullies and overcome her fears.

What do you know about bullying?

Sanders, Pete

London: Gloucester Press, 1993

ISBN: 0749616938

A pictorial guide for children of junior school age.

Don't pick on me: how to handle bullying.

Stones, Rosemary

London: Piccadilly Press, 1993

ISBN: 1853401595

A book on self-esteem and self-protection for children and young people.

FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Bullying. What can parents do?

Brown, Kevin

Crowborough, East Sussex: Monarch, 1997

ISBN: 1854243616

Bullying.

Dore, Sheila

NSPCC

Handforth, Cheshire: Egmont World Limited, 2000

ISBN: 0749847662

Provides information and reassurance for parents on identifying whether a child is being bullied, how to help a child who is bullied, talking to the school, where else to get help and support, and, dealing with a child who is a bully.

101 ways to deal with bullying: a guide for parents.

Elliott, Michele

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997

ISBN: 0340695196

Words will really hurt me: how to protect your child from bullying: a guide for parents and carers.

Ives, Martine

National Autistic Society

London: National Autistic Society, 1999

ISBN: 1899280162

Positive ways to prevent the bullying of autistic children or children with Asperger's Syndrome.

Preventing bullying: a parents' guide.

Kidscape

London: Kidscape, 1995

Overcome bullying for parents.

Munro, Sheila

London: Piccadilly Press, 1997

ISBN: 185340490X

Aims to help parents and carers cope with the bullying of their children: how to talk to children about being bullied, how to help them deal with it.

Bullying: a toolkit for parents.

Parents Advice Centre

Belfast: Parents Advice Centre, 2003

Booklet aimed at helping parents to understand bullying so that they can tackle the problem successfully and with confidence.

Bullying: home, school and community.

Tattum, Delwyn P.

London: David Fulton, 1997

ISBN: 1853464457

Looks at bullying in the social context in which that behaviour takes place.

The bullying problem: how to deal with difficult children.

Train, Alan

London: Souvenir Press, 1995

ISBN: 0285632558

Mainly for parents who are concerned about their child's bullying or victim behaviour.

FOR SCHOOLS AND ORGANISATIONS

Protecting children from racism and racial abuse: a research review.

Barter, Christine

London: NSPCC, 1999

ISBN: 0902498827

Anti-bullying: a drama resource pack.

Casdagli, Penny

Cambridge: Daniels Publishing, 1995

ISBN: 1854672665

For drama workshops on bullying. Includes text of "Only playing, Miss".

Only playing, Miss.

Casdagli, Penny and Deville, Noski

London: Neti-Neti Theatre Co., 1990; distributed by Daniels Publishing.

Video of a play about bullying (56 minutes); performed in Bengali, English and sign language.

Building a peaceful school.

Curry, Mollie

Tamworth: National Association for Special Educational Needs, 2000

ISBN: 190148520X

Explores constructive approaches to enable children to play together, cope with issues around bullying, to learn how to negotiate and to become responsible for their own actions.

Safer schools.

Department for Education

Wolverhampton: Dialogue, 1994

Video showing how five schools in Wolverhampton tackled bullying. Accompanies the pack: "Bullying: don't suffer in silence".

Bullying - don't suffer in silence: an anti-bullying pack for schools.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

London: Department for Education and Skills, 2002

Video (running time approx. 26 minutes) and information pack to help schools tackle bullying. Includes guidance on establishing a whole-school policy on bullying, facts about bullying, strategies to combat bullying, case studies and advice for pupils, parents and families.

Dealing with bullies.

Donnellan, Craig ed.

Cambridge: Independence Educational Publishers, 2003

ISBN: 1861682557

Explores the issue of bullying, using information from charities, web sites, magazine surveys and articles, and newspaper reports and features.

Beat bullying: working with looked after children to overcome threatening behaviour.

Doorbar, Patricia, Hathaway, Jo and Royal, Sue

Brighton: Pavilion Publishing, 2002

ISBN: 1841960128

Pack designed for professionals and carers who work with looked after children, and for young people in care. Focuses on strategies and techniques for overcoming threatening behaviour and on ways to promote safety in residential and foster care settings. Contains exercises, case studies and discussion points.

Sexual bullying: gender conflict and pupil culture in secondary schools.

Duncan, Neil

London: Routledge, 1999

ISBN: 0415191130

Bully-free: activities to promote confidence and friendship.

Elliott, Michele, Shenton, Gaby and Eirew, Roz

London: Kidscape, 1999

ISBN: 1872572111

Contains exercises that can be used with groups of children/adolescents.

Bullying: a practical guide to coping for schools.

Elliott, Michele

Harlow: Pearson Education, 2002

ISBN: 0273659235

Includes sections on: dealing with bullying behaviour in secondary schools and primary schools; bullying and the under fives; helping victims; what to do with bullies; bullying and school non-attendance; peer mentoring; parents and teachers working together; anti-bullying exercises for use with children; positive behaviour strategies; a guide to the law; the long-term effects of bullying; treatment of bullying in a therapeutic community; bullying in children's homes; organisations; and, resources.

How to stop bullying: a Kidscape training guide

Elliott, Michele and Kilpatrick, Jane

London: Kidscape, 2002

ISBN: 1872572014

A training guide for those working with children and young people in groups where bullying might occur. Divided into the following sections: 'working with adults: identifying the problem and devising a policy'; 'working with bullies and victims: changing behaviour'; 'working with students: learning about and dealing with bullying' and 'resources: booklets and organisations'.

Teenscape: a personal safety programme for teenagers

Elliott, Michele

London: Kidscape, 2002

ISBN: 1872572162

Contains practical lessons to help teachers, schools liaisons officers, youth workers and other concerned adults to teach young people how to stay safe. Considers issues such as personal safety, abuse, bullying, crime, rights and responsibilities, relationships, getting help, addiction, and gambling.

Creating a telling school: a preventative approach to bullying.

Essex County Council

Harlow: Essex County Council Education, 1993

Video, booklet and audiocassette. The video features one day at Harlowbury County Primary School.

Towards bully-free schools: [interventions in action].

Glover, Derek, Cartwright, Netta and Gleeson, Denis

Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998

ISBN: 0335199291

Aimed at those involved in policy development in schools and colleges.

Run girl run.

Goldsmith, Richard

Hereford: Rural Media Company, 2002

Video drama (running time 7 mins) for use in secondary schools, which looks at the impact of a bullying incident on everyone involved.

Bullying: a guide to the law. How to tackle bullying inside and outside of school.

Hamilton, Carolyn, Hopegood, Lucy and Rimington, Helen

Children's Legal Centre

Colchester: Children's Legal Centre, 2000

ISBN: 0946109966

Bullying.

Holliday, Jennifer

Barkingside, Essex: Barnardo's Policy, Research and Influencing Unit, 2002

An overview of the research on bullying.

Bullying in Britain: testimonies from teenagers.

Katz, Adrienne, Buchanan, Ann and Bream, Victoria

East Molesey, Surrey: Young Voice, 2001

ISBN: 1903456010

Report of research findings from a study of bullying amongst teenagers.

Preventing racist bullying: what schools can do.

Kidscape

London: Kidscape, 2001

Leaflet containing suggestions for teachers on how to tackle racist bullying.

Respecting others: anti-bullying guidance.

National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales, 2003

ISBN: 0750432411

Provides guidance on tackling bullying in schools, with direct practical solutions to both preventing and dealing with incidents of bullying. Includes case studies, references for further reading, advice for pupils, parents and families and details of organisations that can help.

Deaf children, bullying and mainstream schools.

National Deaf Children's Society

London: National Deaf Children's Society, 2001

Leaflet to help schools to include the specific needs of deaf children when developing policies on bullying.

Bullying: effective action in secondary schools (new window)

Ofsted

London: Ofsted, 2003

The findings and recommendations of a survey carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in LEAs and schools which focused on strategies to reduce incidents of bullying, to support victims and to deal with perpetrators.

Tackling bullying: listening to the views of children and young people (new window)

Oliver, Christine, and Candappa, Mano

Thomas Coram Research Unit

London: Department for Education and Skills, 2003

ISBN: 1841859362

Full report of the 'Tackling bullying: listening to the views of children and young people' report, sponsored by ChildLine and funded by the DfES, which aimed to: explore children's understanding and experiences of, and responses to, bullying; examine children's views concerning adult responses to bullying; identify the support needs of children who experience bullying and explore options concerning the development of anti-bullying strategies.

Stop the bullying: a handbook for schools.

Rigby, Ken

London: Jessica Kingsley, 2002

ISBN: 1843100703

Draws on a 10-year study of bullying in Australian schools to provide information for educators and parents about action that can be taken to stop bullying and the support needed for children who are bullied. Aims to help educators find out what is really happening in their school, develop sound and well-supported anti-bullying policy, work effectively with children in classrooms to gain their support in stopping bullying, deal appropriately and constructively with children who bully others, support and help the children who are victimised by peers at school, and, enable teachers and parents to work together to stop bullying.

Sticks and stones.

Rudd, Lewis, producer.

Birmingham: Central Independent Television, 1990

A video (30 minutes) in which bullies and victims talk about their feelings and motivation, and act out scenes of real incidents. Can be used by parents or teachers as a teaching tool.

Words hurt too: young people and bullying.

Russell, Gail

London: UK Youth, 2003

ISBN: 1904479014

Aimed at teachers, social workers, youth workers and other professionals working with young people who want to raise awareness and address bullying issues. Includes information about the effects of bullying and telling signs, ideas for youth project workers, activities to use with young people and further sources of help and advice.

Tackling bullying in your schools: a practical handbook for teachers.

Sharp, Sonia and Smith, Peter K.

London: Routledge, 1994

ISBN: 0415103746

School bullying: insights and perspectives.

Smith, Peter K. and Sharp, Sonia

London: Routledge, 1994

ISBN: 0415103738

Children's books about bullying.

Stones, Rosemary

Reading: Books for Keeps, 1998

ISBN: 1871566045

A bibliography of children's books about bullying, for all age groups from the under 5s, to 12 years and older, including some titles for parents and teachers.

Bullying: a whole-school approach.

Suckling, Amanda, Temple, Carla and Miesen, Christina

London: Jessica Kingsley, 2002

ISBN: 1843100541

Aims to help teachers, students and parents create a long-term and positive influence on the school environment as a whole in order to address the problem of bullying. Contains theory and hands-on activities for teachers in primary and secondary schools. Includes exercises, lesson plans, photocopy masters and posters.

The anti-bullying handbook.

Sullivan, Keith

Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press, 2000

ISBN: 0195583884

A wibble called Biple (and a few honks): a story for children who have hardened their hearts or become bullies.

Sunderland, Margot and Armstrong, Nicky

Bicester, Oxon: Winslow Press Ltd, 2000

ISBN: 0863882994

Counsellor's guide and story book for use with children. Includes exercises for use with children.

Let it be said.

Welch, Luke

Cambridge: Chilli Pepper Press, 1999

ISBN: 0953054810

A selection of poems by a former victim of bullying.

On the right track.

Wells, Jan and Horsfield, Abi

Leeds: Peacemakers With Attitude, 2000

Video (approx. 10 mins) showing young people telling their stories about being bullied.

New perspectives on bullying.

Rigby, Ken

London: Jessica Kingsley, 2002

ISBN: 185302872X

Defines the characteristics of bullying, looks at how bullying has been viewed historically, considers the harm that bullying does, and proposes explanations for bullying behaviour.

Additional recently published resources:

“Stand up for Us” - challenging homophobia in schools - DfES 1DH Healthy Schools

Toolkit Unit 8: Curriculum – A whole school approach to Emotional Health and Well-being - DfES – Behaviour and Attendance Strand

Guidance section 5 – Useful Websites

European Conference on Bullying www.gold.ac.uk/euconf
Peer Support Systems in Schools www.mentalhealth.org.uk/peer/forum.htm
DfES anti-bullying resource www.dontsufferinsilence.com - has downloadable schools' pack
www.antibullying.net
www.luckyduck.co.uk
www.roehampton.ac.uk/social/depts/psy/psn/index
www.uclan.ac.uk/science/psychol/bully
www.gold.ac.uk/tmr
www.uncg.edu/edu/ericcass/bullying
www.safechild.org
www.bbc.co.uk/education/archive/bully/help.shtml
www.childline.org.uk - comprehensive site on children's problems
www.kidscape.org.uk - downloadable resource packs and DVD available
Scottish Council for Research in Education www.scre.ac.uk/bully [website has a lot of useful information and resources on bullying]
Anti Bullying Campaign www.fife-hpd.demon.co.uk/mhweb/abc.htm;
e-mail AntiBullying@compuserve.com
NSPCC National Protection Helpline www.nspcc.org.uk/fullstop/educaiton
DfEE www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying/pages/familiesindex.html
The Anti Bullying Alliance for the South West – aba@luckyduck.co.uk
Bullying Online (useful section on 'cyber bullying' – www.bullying.co.uk
BBC Schools bullying site has a chatroom for pupils who are being bullied – www.bbc.co.uk/schools/bullying
For Kids by Kids Online – has advice on general web safety as well as bullying – www.fkbko.net
Antibully – good for younger children – www.antibully.org.uk
Act Against Bullying – produces resources for schools – www.actagainstbullying.com

Guidance section 6 – Organisations Offering Advice

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)	22 Highbury Grove London N5 2DQ Advice line: 0171 354 8321
Anti Bullying Alliance for the South West	c/o Linda Liddington Lucky Duck Publishing Solar House Staton Road Kingswood Bristol BS15 4PH Tel: 0117 960 1538
Anti-bullying Campaign	185 Tower Bridge Road London SE1 2UF Tel: 0171 378 1446
British Association of Counselling (BAC)	1 Regent's Place Rugby CV21 2PJ Tel: 01788 578328
British Stammering Association	15 Old Ford Road London E2 9PJ Tel: 0181 983 1003
Changing Faces	1 and 2 Junction Mews London W2 1PN Tel: 0171 706 4232
Childline	Second Floor Royal Mail Building Studd Street London N1 0QJ Tel: 0171 239 1000
Child First	41 Polwarth Terrace Edinburgh EH11 1NU Family Centre: 0131 313 0322 Office: 0131 337 8539
The Children's Legal Centre	University of Essex Wivenhoe Park Colchester CO4 3SQ Tel: 01206 873820

Guidance section 7 - Cyber Bullying

Did you know?

- **Some bullies set up websites dedicated to making other children's lives a misery. If you can trace the hosting company, it will probably agree to close any offensive site**
- **Persistently sending abusive texts or emails is illegal. It breaches the Telecommunications Act and may constitute harassment**
- **One child in five who uses an internet chatroom claims to have been harassed online, and one in six claims to have been the victim of abusive text messages**
- **ChildLine reported a 50 percent rise in calls from bullied children in 2004, with abusive texts and emails partly responsible for the increase**
- **It is possible to trace the computer network from which emails have been sent, but that may not be enough to pinpoint individual culprits**

The children's charity ChildLine took 31,000 calls from bullied children in the year to March 2004, up from 21,000 in the previous 12 months. Despite all the efforts and initiatives of schools and voluntary organisations, it seems bullying just won't go away. Part of the problem is that children are finding new ways to harass their peers. As well as name-calling in the corridor or provocation in the playground, children now have the option of bullying by text message, email, chatroom or even via specially constructed hate websites. This is the age of the cyber bully.

Email

Hi-tech bullying isn't a new phenomenon. In 1999, 15 year-old Gail Jones from Merseyside killed herself by taking an overdose after receiving 20 abusive messages in half an hour; and research in 2002 by the children's charity NCH (formerly National Children's Homes) found 4 percent of children aged 11 to 19 had received threatening or abusive emails from other children.

But it's in the past two years that cyber bullying has really taken hold, with ChildLine counsellors reporting a marked increase in calls about abusive texts and emails. As 90 percent of UK children now have email access at school or at home, it is an easy means for girls and boys alike to attack fellow pupils in a way that makes it difficult (but not impossible) to trace the perpetrator. It also means there are few witnesses. The victim may be alone in his or her room being constantly bombarded with nasty messages but with no one present to offer comfort or help. Setting up a fake email address takes minutes, so the potential for anonymity means bullies can claim to be voicing opinions held by many. "We all hate you!" can be difficult to ignore in cyber-space when the victim has no idea how many are in on the message.

Text messages

Text messages may have made the lives of English teachers a misery, but this is nothing compared to the experiences of the 16 percent in the NCH survey who had received bullying messages. Texting is a form of cyber bullying particularly prevalent among girls. According to Liz Carnell, director of the anti-bullying charity Bullying Online, the typical perpetrator is aged 13 to 17 and her victim is a former friend with whom she has fallen out. While boys are more likely to physically assault or humiliate those they want to attack, girls will tend to use more psychological methods. Girls are often more articulate and manipulative than boys, and will try to exclude socially those they dislike, turn the victim's friends against her and make their target aware of her isolation. A typical message would be: "We r all going to the shops and we don't want u 2 come."

When boys do send bullying texts, they tend to threaten violence. The relative difficulty in defining deliberate social exclusion, compared to physical assault, may be one reason why girls are statistically less likely to report bullying than boys.

Hate websites

Cheap software packages give any moderately ICT-literate teenagers the ability to construct their own website. Creative bullies can easily set up sites dedicated to spreading malicious rumours about other children, or just targeting abuse at them. Word of the site's address will be spread at school and the "underground" nature will add to its allure. Pupils will log on to read or add to the comments. As the site's owner is not immediately apparent, the victim can feel it is impossible to do anything about it. Some examples are so offensive, including threats of violence or racist abuse, that they break the law. "The police say they prefer to have these sites shut down rather than prosecute those who put them up," say Ms Carnell. "But these people get away with it and start up another one."

Chatrooms and noticeboards

Some internet chatrooms set up by local youth services or clubs have been hijacked to act as noticeboards for nasty comments. In August 2004, one website, Mouth2Mouth, was shut down after complaints. The site had been set up as a community chatroom for pupils in north London and Hertfordshire, but it soon became a repository for vicious rumours, many of a sexual nature, and racist taunts. Hertfordshire police investigated some of the threats, but by September the site was up and running again in a new guise. Research by the University of Central Lancashire in 2002 showed that one in five children aged nine to 16 had used a chatroom. Of those, one in five had been harassed there. One in seven admitted to harassing another user.

The bully can hide ...

It's easy for a bully to remain anonymous while sending emails or phone texts – or even to adopt a false identity. Some websites enable you to send text messages to a mobile phone. They ask for your own mobile number but don't always verify that it is genuine, so children can enter someone else's number and the text message will appear to have come from that phone. There have been reports of children "framing" classmates by sending nasty text messages in this way, usually in an attempt to break up a friendship. This type of bullying relies on a good grasp of social dynamics and is mostly favoured by girls. Anonymity also means some children are tempted to behave in ways they wouldn't usually contemplate; they become bullies only behind the cloak of anonymity afforded by cyber-space. "Young people routinely use online environments to experiment with identities and personalities," say Charlotte Barrow, who conducted the University of Central Lancashire research. What they then do with these personalities is uncertain.

... their target can't

Abusive messages can feel more personal than physical attack. The fact that the harassment can penetrate a victim's home sometimes makes it more upsetting than abuse hurled in a school playground. These messages stay with the victim, and there have been reports of siblings and parents receiving messages to further humiliate the target, so there seems no escape, no refuge. "Children used to be able to go home and shut the door on their bullies; now the harassment follows them home. It's unrelenting," says John Carr of NCH.

Linda Frost, senior bullying counsellor for the children's charity Kidscape, says the victims of cyber bullying are more likely to self-harm; a girl alone in her room receiving text messages has no one to lash out at except herself. Cyber bullies are also less likely to stop of their own accord, because they see no consequences. "If they send an email or text message they are not seeing the reaction of the victim so there's no remorse built in, it's very impersonal," says Linda Frost. "I had a case where one girl organised all her classmates to send text messages to one girl saying, 'Kill yourself, we hate you'. The cumulative effect was devastating, but the motivation was just stupidity – the girl thought it would be a lark."

Where can children turn for help?

In the NCH research, 29 percent of respondents had told no one about the bullying. Of those who spoke up, 42 percent told a friend, 32 percent a parent. The University of Central Lancashire research showed that children would be much more likely to inform chatroom moderators and internet service providers; 58 percent said they would seek help this way. Sixteen percent said they would tell no one. The contemporary nature of cyber bullying may make it difficult for children to turn to older people for help. Many parents, for examples, admit that the technology underpinning the phenomenon is a mystery to them. Children see this as another barrier to their problem being properly understood. "Recent surveys have asked children, 'What is your most prized possession?' and an overwhelming majority have put their mobile phone at or near number one," says Mr. Carr. "And they're scared that if they tell their parents they will be told, 'Well, if it's causing you so much grief, I'm going to take it away', which is, of course, not the right approach. Many parents and teachers understand bullying in the playground because it happened to them. None of this will have done."

Bullying and the law

Another possibility, though one few teenagers are likely to take without adult support, is to turn to the police. Sending offensive texts or emails or making malicious phone calls may breach the 1984 Telecommunications Act. If the messages are grossly offensive, indecent or menacing, or they are being persistently sent with the aim of causing annoyance or needless anxiety, sending them is illegal. Under the 1994 Harassment Act, repeated messages sent as a course of action that causes distress may also be criminal. Harassment carries a maximum sentence of five years. Ms Carnell suggests policy be told early on to warn off the perpetrators, although there have been few prosecutions.

The role of the school

"Abusive messaging tends to be less well dealt with than physical bullying," says Ms Frost. "With emails bullies can claim it wasn't them, and the school will know only if the child reports it. Children who can't prove something has happened will get into the cycle of keeping it to themselves and thinking, 'It's me – there's something wrong with me'." Teachers' knowledge is variable. "There are wonderful schools out there which are on the ball and very supportive, running peer group mentoring and all sorts of things. Others are unwilling to accept there are issues. Cyber bullying may happen outside school hours, but it still reflects on school achievement. There's a grey line of responsibility that says, 'If it happens out of school, it's not my issue'."

Shutting the bullies down

If teachers or parents discover a hate website, the hosting company (the firm that makes the site available on the web) can be traced and contacted to shut it down. To trace the website owner and the hosting company, go to www.geektools.com. Enter the "Who is" section and type in the website address. It will give the full names, addresses and phone number of the site owner, and the name of the company hosting the site. If it is a company offering free webspace, the name of the site owner may not be available. Sending the host company an email saying that one of its sites is delivering abuse should prompt it to close it. Pointing out that the site may be in breach of the Telecommunications Act is often a good strategy.

The media has become aware of the problem; a recent storyline in the teen soap *Hollyoaks* concentrated on the issue. When the Mouth2Mouth site got out of hand, victims and their parents complained to the site's host. It initially failed to act, but relented when Hertfordshire police and Liz Carnell got involved. "I sat in the forum and kept posting messages explaining the effect these abusive postings might have on someone who was distressed," she says. "And how they could be guilty of harassment as well as breaking the Telecommunications Act. After I explained how easy it would be for the police to trace these individuals, the forums started shutting down. Many of those posting expressed the wish to have the forum closed."

Shutting the bullies up

Emails are more difficult to trace, although it is possible to pinpoint the computer network a message is sent from. To do this, recipients need to set the options on their email account header to show the sender's IP address (four sets of digits separated by decimal points, for example, 12.181.10.722) then cross-refer against internet registry records (freely available on the web) which will indicate which computer cluster the email was sent from. Full instructions are available on the For Kids By Kids Online site. But free email accounts can be set up within minutes, and if messages are sent from an internet café or a public computer in a school, identifying the sender is difficult. Victims are best advised to change email address and give out the new one to trusted people only.

Text messages can also be avoided by changing phone numbers, which any of the phone operators should do free for anyone suffering harassment (at least for the first number change; more than one change and the operator may charge you). They usually wait until a certain number of messages have been received or you have reported the calls to the police. Some companies are developing technology to bar calls and texts from certain numbers, but this won't stop the bullies using one of their friends' phones instead. This is why buying a new SIM card, which immediately gives you a new number, is often the best option. Service providers, with the police, will almost always be able to trace a call or message and they can stop that person making any calls or sending any messages – although the trail may end with a pay-as-you-go mobile without the perpetrator's name.

On the horizon

Many threatening emails and messages are of the "We are watching you" / "We know where you live" variety. The increasing use of picture messaging and 3G video phones can make victims feel especially unsafe as they are sent concrete proof that they are being followed or observed.

ChildLine noticed a significant rise in the numbers of calls about text bullying in the early months of 2001, which it put down to a rise in the number of children being given pay-as-you-go mobile phones for Christmas. With Britain's main operators now rolling out their 3G systems, video stalking could become a big problem this year.